

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-07 LAB-04
NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02
/043 W

-----098749 311219Z /10

R 310830Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY LISBON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4560
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA
USMISSION USNATO
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
COMUSFORAZ

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 LISBON 0750

BRUSSELS FOR USEEC

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, PO
SUBJECT: COMMUNISTS GAIN MORE GROUND IN
UNION ELECTIONS

SUMMARY: ON JAN 26A PS/PSD "OPEN LETTER" SLATE WON A
NARROW VICTORY IN THE IMPORTANT LISBON OFFICE WORKERS
UNION ELECTIONS BUT THE INCREASED STRENGTH OF THE
COMMUNIST-LED OPPOSITION WILL MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR THE
VICTORS TO MAINTAIN CONTROL OF THE UNION'S GENERAL ASSEMBLY.
EARLIER IN THE MONTH, SLATES BACKED BY THE COMMUNIST-
DOMINATED GENERAL WORKERS CONFEDERATION (CGTP-IN) EASILY
WON ELECTIONS IN THE LISBON METALWORKERS UNION, THE NATIONAL
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UNION OF POSTAL AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS WORKERS, AND THE
LISBON DISTRICT HIGHWAY TRANSPORT WORKERS UNION.
CGTP-IN CANDIDATES ARE ALSO EXPECTED TO DEFEAT A PSD
LIST IN JAN 31 ELECTIONS OF THE MERCHANTS MARINE AND
FISHERMAN'S UNION. THE CGTP-IN SHOWINGS, DESPITE HEAVY
WORKER TURNOUTS, HAS SOLIDIFIED THE ALREADY DOMINANT
COMMUNIST POSITION IN ORGANIZED LABOR. END SUMMARY.

1. OFFICE UNION ELECTIONS: ON JAN 26 WITH 65 PERCENT OF ELIGIBLE VOTERS VOTING, A PS/PSD "OPEN LETTER" LIST OF CANDIDATES MANAGED TO ETAIN CONTROL OF THE 55,000 MEMBER LISBON OFFICE WORKERS UNION TURNING BACK A CGTP-IN UNITARY LIST BY A VOTE OF 15,500 TO 13,544. ACCORDING TO UNOFFICIAL RETURNS, SLATES SPONSORED BY THE FAR-LEFT UDP AND MRPP HAD A COMBINED TOTAL OF ONLY 2,000 VOTES BUT WHEN ADDED TO THE CGTP SLATE'S TOTAL, IT IS APPARENT THAT THE OPEN LETTER HAS FAILED TO WIN BY A MAJORITY IN THE MOST IMPORTANT OF ITS DWINDLING NUMBER OF AFFILIATED UNIONS. THE STRONG COMMUNIST SHOWING WILL PROBABLY MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR THE PS/PSD LEADERSHIP TO CONTROL THE UNION'S GENERAL ASSEMBLY. IN OTHER UNIONS COMMUNIST ELEMENTS HAVE MANAGED TO CONTROL THE POORLY ATTENDED ASSEMBLIES AND FRUSTRATE THE EFFORTS OF NON-COMMUNIST LEADERS TO EFFECTIVELY FULFILL THEIR FUNCTIONS. THE MOST RECENT EXAMPLE WAS IN THE SOUTHERN BANKWORKERS UNION WHERE A VOCAL LEFTIST MINORITY IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FORCED THE DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP TO CALL PREMATURELY FOR UNION ELECTIONS NOW SET FOR APRIL 1.

2. ALL-OUT CAMPAIGN: THE OFFICE WORKERS UNION ELECTIONS WERE PERHAPS THE MOST HOTLY CONTESTED IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY PORTUGAL. BILLED AS A SHOWDOWN BETWEEN OPEN LETTER AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE CGTP-IN, THE CAMPAIGN WAS INTENSIVE AND HIGHLY PUBLICIZED WITH HEAVY EXPENDITURES ON BOTH SIDES. IN THE LAST HOURS THE CGTP ACCUSED THE GOP OF COLLUSION IN A SOCIALIST MEDIA BLITZ WHICH UTILIZED RADIO AND TELEVISION IN SUPPORTING THE OPEN LETTER SLATE. WHILE THE PS/PSD CAMPAIGN, WHICH IN ITS FINAL STAGES RECEIVED AN UNUSUAL CDS ENDORSEMENT, DID PRODUCE A HEAVY TURNOUT, THE COMMUNISTS WON AN INCREASED SHARE OF THE VOTE. IN 1975 ELECTIONS THE OPEN LETTER EASILY DEFEATED AN INTERSINDICAL SLATE BY 13,981 TO 7,300 WITH ABOUT 3,000 VOTES GOING TO THE FAR LEFT.

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3. METALWORKER ELECTIONS: ON JAN 14 A CGTP-IN UNITARY SLATE SWEEPED THE METALWORKER UNION OF LISBON ELECTIONS EASILY DEFEATING AN OPEN LETTER LIST OF CANDIDATES BY A VOTE OF 13,019 TO 2,861 WITH AN ADDITIONAL 1,200 VOTES DIVIDED AMONG FAR-LEFT CANDIDATES. THE CGTP-IN VICTORY IN THIS 56,000 MEMBER UNION WAS FULLY EXPECTED. CGTP-IN HEGEMONY IN THE BLUE COLLAR SECTOR IS SUCH THAT DEMOCRATIC FORCES CANNOT SERIOUSLY CONTEST ELECTIONS. NEVERTHELESS, WHILE THE TURNOUT WAS NOT NEARLY AS GREAT AS IN THE OFFICE WORKERS ELECTIONS, THE PCP SPONSORED INCUMBENTS WERE AGAIN THE BENEFICIARIES OF SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASED VOTER PARTICIPATION. IN 1975 ELECTIONS AN INTERSINDICAL SLATE DEFEATED A COMBINED PS/UDP LIST BY 7,222 TO 2,655.

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4. POSTAL AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS: WITH NEARLY 35 PERCENT OF ELIGIBLE MEMBERS VOTING, A CGTP-IN UNITARY LIST WITHSTOOD A FORMIDABLE CHALLENGE BY A UDP LIST OF CANDIDATES 4,654 TO 3,710. SEPARATE PSD AND PS SLATES RECEIVED 3,173 AND 2,915 RESPECTIVELY WITH 500 VOTES GOING TO MRPP. THE JAN 18 ELECTIONS WERE A RERUN OF ELECTIONS HELD LAST NOV 28 WHICH WERE DECLARED INVALID BECAUSE OF VOTING IRREGULARITIES. IN THE RERUN, JUST TWO MONTHS LATER, THE CGTP-IN GROUP INCREASED ITS MARGIN OF VICTORY BY NEARLY ONE THOUSAND VOTES

LARGELY AT THE EXPENSE OF PS AND PSD AS THE DUP AND MRPP
VOTES WERE RELATIVELY UNCHANGED.

5. TRANSPORT ELECTIONS: IN LESS SIGNIFICANT ELECTIONS OF
THE HIGHWAY TRANSPORT WORKERS UNION OF LISBON HELD ON JAN 17
AN OPEN LETTER BID FOR CONTROL WAS REJECTED BY A VOTE OF
3,137 TO 1,280. WHILE A SMALL PERCENTAGE OF THE UNION'S
14,000 MEMBERS VOTED, THE TURNOUT WAS CONSIDERABLY MORE
THAN THE 1,400 WHO VOTED IN 1976 AND HERE AGAIN THE CGTP-IN
CANDIDATES WERE THE BENEFACTORS.

6. COMMENT: OPEN LETTER OFFICIALS ANNOUNCED JUST PRIOR
TO THE OFFICE WORKERS UNION ELECTIONS THAT WIN OR LOSE, THE
WOULD HOLD A NATIONAL PLENARY IN FEBRUARY FOR THE PURPOSE
OF "REORGANIZING" THE LABOR MOVEMENT IN ORDER TO OFFER A
"DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE" TO WORKERS. THIS WILL UNDOUBTEDLY
GIVE PROPONENTS OF CREATING A PARALLEL ORGANIZATION TO THE
CGTP-IN A SMALL MEASURE OF RENEWED HOPE. HOWEVER, DESPITE
ITS NARROW VICTORY IN THE OFFICE WORKER ELECTIONS, THE
OPEN LETTER IS BEING VIEWED LESS AND LESS AS A VIABLE
ALTERNATIVE TO THE CGTP-IN. NOT ONLY HAS ITS CONTINUED LOSS
OF AFFILIATES AND INABILITY TO MOUNT A SERIOUS CHALLENGE TO
THE COMMUNISTS CAUSED CREDIBILITY PROBLEMS, BUT PS LEADERS
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BY AND LARGE ARE STILL NOT CONVINCED THAT DIRECT CONFRONTA-
TION WITH THE CGTP-IN THROUGH A PARALLEL ORGANIZATION WOULD
BE SUCCESSFUL. THESE LEADERS ARE MORE INCLINED TO PUSH FOR
THE DEVELOPMENT OF VERTICAL INDUSTRY-WIDE UNIONS WHICH
WOULD EXPLOIT TRADITIONAL AND HIGHLY FRAGMENTED UNION
STRUCTURES TO DRAW WORKERS AWAY FROM CGTP-IN. A CASE IN
POINT IS THE RECENTLY ORGANIZED NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC UNION
OF CHEMICAL AND PHARMACEUTICAL WORKERS WHICH THE LABOR
MINISTRY CERTIFIED LAST WEEK AND ALREADY CLAIMS 5,000 MEMBERS.
REGARDLESS OF WHICH APPROACH IS ADOPTED, PARALLEL OR
VERTICAL, DEMOCRATIC FORCES ARE ON THE ROPES AND PROSPECTS
FOR HOLDING THEIR OWN LET ALONE MAKING NEW INROADS ARE NOT
PROMISING.
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Message Attributes

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